

MEMORANDUM

To: C.I.F.A. Members and Attendees

From: Elizabeth Reed, Personnel Administrative Manager

Date: March 7, 2018

Subject: 2019 Fire Lieutenant, Fire Captain, Fire Battalion Chief and Fire Deputy Chief Examinations

The following is a summary of the items discussed during a meeting held on Friday, February 16, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. This meeting had been scheduled to discuss plans related to the use of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in preparation for the upcoming Fire promotional exams for the classifications of Fire Battalion Chief and Fire Deputy Chief. Due to scheduling conflicts, this meeting was cancelled and rescheduled for March 2, 2018. However, several invitees did not receive the cancellation/rescheduling notice for the meeting and arrived at the Commission offices on the 16th at 9:00 a.m. Elizabeth Reed was notified of the arrival of invitees and called-in to the meeting by phone. All attendees agreed to proceed with the meeting and discuss the planned use of SMEs and two other pending topics still unresolved from the first C.I.F.A. meeting.

Attendees: Christopher Blair, Fire Battalion Chief, I.A.F.F.
Mark Mattox, Fire Captain, I.A.F.F.
David Montgomery, President, I.A.F.F.
Elizabeth Reed, Personnel Administrative Manager, Civil Service
Douglas Sarff, Department Human Resources Officer, Public Safety

Topics of Discussion:

1. Use of External or Internal Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) for the Development of the 2019 Fire Battalion Chief and Fire Deputy Chief Promotional Exams

In the last C.I.F.A. meeting, the International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 67 (I.A.F.F.) indicated they wanted non-City (external) SMEs to be used for the development of the Fire Battalion Chief and Fire Deputy Chief exams in order to mitigate issues of alleged/perceived



cheating. Columbus Civil Service Commission (CSC) staff shared concerns with the use of this approach at this assessment level due to the need for extensive knowledge of division-specific policies and procedures necessary for valid and reliable test question development – knowledge external SMEs would not have. Chief Walton offered for consideration the option of using internal SMEs sequestered from all division work and charged with assisting only with test development/review activities until the administration of the exam was completed.

Due to the potential cost and temporary workforce realignment resulting from the use of “sequestered” internal SMEs, it was agreed that a meeting with Safety Director Pettus, Doug Sarff, Department Human Resources Officer for Public Safety, and Fire Assistant Chief David Walton should take place for input and direction. At the meeting, Director Pettus expressed that if the I.A.F.F. is raising concerns that Fire personnel are cheating on exams, then such concerns need to be taken seriously. Every effort must be made to ‘close the door’ on opportunities to cheat, and the use of internal SMEs does not, apparently, ‘shut the door’ on such cheating. While we can make every effort to create a great exam, if people cheat, the success of that exam is nullified. He further stated that, even if it means using dollars from Safety’s budget to utilize external SMEs for these exams, that’s the direction we should go. Based upon this direction and the budgetary commitment, the Commission and I.A.F.F. representatives agreed external SMEs would be used for these exams.

2. Test Consultant

The I.A.F.F. will continue to utilize an I.A.F.F. test consultant for the upcoming Fire Promotional exams. I.A.F.F. confirmed they have not yet selected a consultant and would be able to provide consultant details in the next couple weeks.

3. Appeals and Clerical Review for Fire Captain Exam

The Commission plans to maintain the same process as agreed upon during the 2017 administration of the Fire Captain Tactical Exam appeals and clerical review. This agreement includes the following:

The Fire Captain Promotional Exam, Phase II-Tactical will allow for an appeal and clerical review. The appeal process will consist of four showings of the test video each day. Candidates who are present at the appeal process will receive the answer key and the appeal form(s). Candidates will have an opportunity to watch the test video. Candidates may appeal to have keyed points added, clarified, and/or removed. Candidates who are present for the clerical review process will receive the final key and each grader’s response in order to ensure the points were tallied correctly.

The I.A.F.F. wants reconsideration regarding how the clerical review process for Fire Captain is administered. They expressed that they want the Commission to provide a transcription of verbal responses given by each candidate so that during the clerical review process, they could compare their transcribed responses to the credited points given to them by assessors. Candidates could then petition for points not awarded that they believe merited credit. The rationale for this included the lack of accuracy of Commission staff in grading previous written responses.

In response, the Commission raised the following points: 1) the testing process used in 2017 was touted as effective by the I.A.F.F., affirming there is no need to change the review process; 2) the clerical review is just that, a review of written responses, candidate responses are given verbally, as such, they are not conducive to a clerical review; 3) verifying the accuracy of scores is, in fact, a clerical review; 4) three out-of-state assessors will grade responses independently, compare, and discuss differences; 5) fewer than 50 candidates will be scored compared to the 200 to 300 candidates scored previously; as such, issues concerning grading errors due to fatigue, etc. is moot.

The group did not come to agreement on this issue.